



ARTWORKS ON THE U.S. - MEXICO BORDER

Architectural Responses to Defy the Limit

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The Berlin Wall, a barrier, caused multi-leveled political division; it divided the city, Germany, Europe, and cut the Eastern Bloc off from the Western world. This wall stayed up for three decades until its fall in 1989, when it became a symbol of freedom and unification in the eyes of the world. However, a borderless world remains a metaphor; in 2016, the U.S. President's declaration to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border aroused strong reactions of contestation. Thus, border artists, like many activists, oppose it through means of subversive productions. This paper sheds light on a series of performances, showing how these artistic productions positioned themselves vis-à-vis this border fence. I will go through a sampling of works to argue that responses tend to be architectural when artists proceed by spatializing an area's boundary, allowing me to further demonstrate how they are redefining the geopolitical and biopolitical features of the border.

Border, wall, border art, architecture, performance, biopolitics

Œuvres d'art à la frontière entre les États-Unis et le Mexique. Réponses architecturales au défi de la limite

Le mur de Berlin, une barrière, a provoqué une division politique à plusieurs niveaux ; il a divisé la ville, l'Allemagne, l'Europe et coupé le bloc de l'Est du monde occidental. Ce mur est resté en place pendant trois décennies jusqu'à sa chute en 1989, devenant alors un symbole de liberté et d'unification aux yeux du monde. Cependant, un monde sans frontières reste une métaphore ; en 2016, la déclaration du président américain de construire un mur le long de la frontière entre les États-Unis et le Mexique a suscité de vives réactions de contestation. Ainsi, les artistes frontaliers, comme de nombreux activistes, s'y opposent par le biais de productions subversives. Cet article met en lumière une série de performances, montrant comment ces productions artistiques se sont positionnées vis-à-vis de cette barrière frontalière. Je passerai en revue un échantillon d'œuvres pour soutenir que les réponses tendent à être architecturales lorsque les artistes procèdent à la spatialisation des limites d'une zone, ce qui me permettra de démontrer plus avant comment ils redéfinissent les caractéristiques géopolitiques et biopolitiques de la frontière.

Frontière, mur, art frontalier, architecture, performance, biopolitique

Kunst an der US-mexikanischen Grenze. Architektonische Antworten zur Anfechtung dieser Grenze

Die Berliner Mauer, eine Trennwand, verursachte eine politische Spaltung auf mehreren Ebenen; sie teilte die Stadt, Deutschland und Europa und schnitt den Ostblock von der westlichen Welt ab. Diese Mauer blieb

drei Jahrzehnte lang bestehen, bis sie 1989 fiel und in den Augen der Welt zum Symbol für Freiheit und Vereinigung wurde. Eine grenzenlose Welt bleibt jedoch eine Metapher; 2016 löste die Erklärung des US-Präsidenten, eine Mauer entlang der Grenze zwischen den USA und Mexiko zu errichten, heftige Reaktionen der Anfechtung aus. Wie viele Aktivisten wehren sich auch Grenzkünstler mit subversiven Produktionen dagegen. Dieser Beitrag beleuchtet eine Reihe von Performances und zeigt, wie sich diese künstlerischen Produktionen gegenüber dem Grenzzaun positionieren. Anhand einer Auswahl von Werken werde ich darlegen, dass die Reaktionen eher architektonischer Natur sind, wenn die Künstler die Grenze eines Gebietes verräumlichen, und so zeigen, wie sie die geopolitischen und biopolitischen Merkmale der Grenze neu definieren.

Grenze, Mauer, Grenzkunst, Architektur, Performance, Biopolitik

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Introduction

Since the Roman *Limes* or the Great Wall of China, walls have constantly served sovereignties as artefacts of protection and defense. Throughout history, barriers such as the Berlin Wall or the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) have proliferated as a result of division and warfare.

A literature review informs us about the ancient walls, serving as testaments to the advent of the phenomenon of territory delimitation, a most recent development taking the form of a hybrid structure. Also, part of the literature on the art world informs us of the treatment of this question by artists.

Starting in the early twentieth century, contemporary borders have become remarkably visible and extremely closed off. According to the most recent research and studies of Élisabeth Vallet and the Frontiers team from the Raoul-Dandurand Chair of the University of Quebec, the number of border walls worldwide is estimated to 70 total built and projected in 2017 (Vallet, 2017), measuring 40,000 kilometers, the equivalent of the circumference of the Earth, and the result of a frightening world. The research's data number was quoted by a Trump's tweet (77 walls) to defend his project. For her part, Vallet tweeted that the use of her material by the American President was incomplete to support his words (Riga, 2019). According to her, the total number of walls more than tripled in the 20 years after the end of the Cold War (Vallet, 2014, p.1-2). Furthermore, she calls for drawing distinctions between contemporary border walls and the border fortifications of the past, due to the changing nature and function of the wall. She adds: "the modern wall, as a 'post-Westphalian' phenomenon, extends beyond the limits of the military structures, such as the Maginot Line or the Siegfried Line, which typified the 1945–1991 wall's period from classical border barriers by three features: control of the border, physical demarcation of the border and asymmetry," she considers that "These walls are artefacts of a new era in international relations and of a new understanding of the very idea of the border" (ibid., p.2).

After the Cold War, Vallet recognized two accelerators, the first being the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, and the second being the Arab Spring of 2011.

Since the 1990s, the closure of borders has been reinforced by the upsurge in seeking security, spurred by the events of 9/11, manifested through a rebordering and reconfiguration of territories. In fact, according to Balibar's proposal, the border is no longer on the margins of the state

but constitutes the heart of politics (Amilhat Szary and Giraut, 2015, p.6).

The border solidifies inequalities in wealth and power between the United States and Mexico, in addition to the latter's subjugation principally through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994, the same year in which a metal wall was raised in Operation Gatekeeper. Rachel St. John reports:

Under Gatekeeper, by June 1998 the total length of border fences and walls within the San Diego sector increased from nineteen to over 45 miles, the number of Border Patrol agents rose from 980 to 2,264, 766 underground sensors were installed, and the number of infrared scopes in use increased from twelve to 59. A ten-foot-high metal wall replaced the chain-link fence along the boundary line between San Ysidro and Tijuana (St. John, 2011, p.204).

The separation barrier between the U.S. and Mexico, in its present form, was mostly erected under the administrations of G. W. Bush and B. Obama, and has been nicknamed 'Bush wall' or the 'Tortilla Curtain.' This metal barrier spans about one-third of the 3,141 kilometers (1,952 miles) which make up the entire length of the frontier, and it towers higher than five meters. Rachel St. John traced the transformation of the Western U.S.-Mexico border, "of the once-unmarked boundary line into a space of gates, fences, and patrols" (St. John, 2011, p.2). She furthermore speaks about the boundary's metamorphosis (ibid., p.12).

Contrary to all his predecessors, Donald Trump did not erect a meter of his wall. The 1,600 kilometers (994 miles) project, requesting an exorbitant budget of 25 billion dollars, is still blocked. Moreover, no variant was approved among the eight prototypes he examined in San Diego in 2018. All of the above precedes arguments the politicization of the border and its materialization since 1990. The political border discourse in 2016 shifts from the previous wall to Trump's projected one.

During his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump stated, as his key pledge, that: "We will build a great wall along the southern border." He has committed to seal off the frontier with Mexico in its missing parts and to reinforce it where he deems necessary. Against this backdrop of the U.S. President's hardline stance on immigration, drastic decisions were made: the barrier is over-equipped with projectors, heat sensors, and motion detectors, while heavily armed U.S. soldiers patrol the line. The wall became a symbol of nationalism, xenophobia, and protectionism for some, though 50% of U.S. citizens are opposed to

it. It has also been widely condemned internationally. Considered metaphorically as a new apartheid (the former policy of racial divide in South Africa, repealed since 1991) artists, architects, and activists moved against this wall by creating poignant art which raises questions about nationalism, origins, racism, immigration, censorship, surveillance, and identity. In fact, a myriad of boundaries and divides float above the surface. That is what Guillermo Gómez-Peña, reverse anthropologist and political artist of the first order, demonstrated to be a complexity of the border: "My journey not only goes from South to North, but from the past to the future, from Spanish to English, and from one side of myself to another" (Gómez-Peña, 1991, p.23).

Besides, Gómez-Peña through the iterations of his serial performance from 2006 to 2008 of "The Mexorcist 2" and "3" assaults the demonized construction of the U.S.-Mexican border as a literal and symbolic zone lined with rising nativism, three-ply fences, globalization forces, and transnational identities.

Thus, the dividing wall is a free-fall into the space between the two cultures, and a scar upon the territory which splits North from South. This border is the most frequently crossed international frontier in the world, with an estimated 350 million legal crossings against 400 thousand illegal crossings entering per year. Meanwhile, the region of San Diego-Tijuana records fifty million crossings. The border wall cuts deeply through sister-city communities, namely San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez, where the maquiladoras have developed, breaking the cross-border area and destroying its local economy.

Concerning the threats of drug traffickers and smugglers on the one hand, and terrorism on the other, Vallet, the Canadian geographer, states: "Since 2001, the purpose of new walls has been not so much to convert a front line into a *de facto* border as to address two threats: migrants and terrorists (the two sometimes overlap or blend together in the pro-wall discourse)" (Vallet, 2014, p.3).

On the social front, the divide separates families from members who live at its south. In particular, the fence in the San-Diego sector, which was made with a single strand of a cable of welded metal panels, was replaced by double layers consisting in steel mesh and in some places triple-fencing, where the Friendship Park is situated next to the Pacific Ocean; in between the two main fences there is a "no man's land."

Evidently, each wall reinforces its logic of transgression. Thus, the U.S.-Mexican border has more than 150 tunnels, and there is much

bypassing of walls and barriers by sea with submarines or by air with drones.

These artistic performances or international conjecture introduces "border art." The latter may concern any physical or imagined boundary and deals with socioeconomic and political tensions. The term was coined in 1984 by a binational artist collective in the United States/Mexico called the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF) based in San Diego-Tijuana, where the artists charged the borderlands for activism and the production of art. They mixed videos, performances, and site-specificityⁱ in their works. One of its founding members was the Mexican/Chicano artist Gómez-Peña. In 1979 he performed *Border Walker* where he walked from Tijuana to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles in two and a half days, in addition to *The Loneliness of the Immigrant* where he wrapped his body and put it on the ground in a public elevator for 24 hours, a performance which was fully documented for the art world.

He explained the propagation of these performances and of border art using the involvement and exposure of the body: "My experience is not unique by any means. Thousands of artists in the U.S. and other countries are currently crossing different kinds of borders. And as they do it, they are making a new kind of art, an art of fusion and displacement that shatters the distorting mirrors of the 'Western avant-garde'" (Gómez-Peña, 1991, p.23).

Across border walls and frontiers, contemporary art has addressed political issues on the one hand and served as a subversive, activist, and militant medium on the other. It ostentatiously started with graffiti and tags of freedom and revolt on the Berlin Wall which is considered as a pioneer of early art on/at the border, as it was in the 1980s the target of art works produced by future big names of contemporary art such as Thierry Noir in 1984 or Keith Haring in 1986.

However, sometime before this, in particular in the 1960s, land art dealt with borders according to a landscape approach which Amilhat Szary proposed to call "Artscape": "Political landscape can, therefore, be as much transformed as highlighted by what we can tentatively call an 'artscape' or 'borderscape'" (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.217). In fact, she recognizes the passing from landscape to artscape, through land art. To highlight the importance of landscape, as an open and a free area, "Dennis Cosgrove who showed how, during the modern period, landscape was naturalizing power" (ibid., p.215).

In 1976, Christo and Jeanne Claude presented *Running Fence*, which is an artificial barrier over nearly 40 kilometers (25 miles), as a metaphor for

the arbitrary nature of political and geopolitical frontiers. The ephemeral installation lasted for only two weeks.

Border art is most present around the more criticized or mediatized walls such as those found in Israel/Palestine, the U.S.-Mexico, Berlin, Belfast, and Cyprus. These fences are taken up by contemporary artists and become their canvas, with artwork by guerrillaⁱⁱ artists such as JR or Banksy on the U.S.-Mexico wall, as well as the mythical character of the graffiti scene around the Israeli separation barrier.

The post-9/11 era spread fears of terrorism succeeding the backdrop of insecurity bred by globalization, which was supposed to abolish fences, as borders conversely become more topological.

Michel Foucher, expert in geographical frontiers, tends to be less alarming, if we know that all it about a manipulated discourse: "Contemporary analyses have pointed to a particular category of reaffirmation, that of 'walls.' Although they are in the minority, in Western opinions – which lean towards a bad conscience – they have come to symbolize the realities of the border" (Foucher, 2016, p.15, translation IH).

According to him, since "We forgot that our peaceful borders were former front lines," questioning the phenomenon of rebordering in light of the geopolitical order inherited from 1945-1991 can be significant in the context of an active border scene.

In our era, walls play a dual role to legitimize their erection: 1) they maintain feelings of insecurity, 2) they assuage fears and create a feeling of security for those who are inside. The border as a geo/bio-political artefact is far from being considered a trace on a map. Indeed, the line from the poem "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost remains resonant: "Good fences make good neighbors."

This is what the present paper will expose and investigate. How does art deal with borders? Through which meanings does it ignore boundaries and geographical limits? At last, how does it reduce the border's thickness?

Art "on/at" the Border

Through an ambivalence between the site and its causality, art on the border, art born from the border, and art against the border, an obvious site-specificity emerges.

Firstly, I will attempt to highlight the diversity of works of art that treat of the U.S.-Mexico border, namely: graffiti, political art, public art, and guerrilla art. The wall is mostly marked with tags, crosses, photos of undocumented migrants or "*wetbacks*,"ⁱⁱⁱ deceased over the course of their

psycho-physiological trials in the crossing of the line, destined to perpetual motion until borders become fully closed and walls are built so as to become the final destinations for migrants established mechanically as "immigrants." Consequently, much of the artwork was not claimed by artists but by migrants/immigrants, and remains anonymous, as traces and remembrances, per this quote: "Among the traces to be preserved, there are precisely those of the sufferings of others, those that we inflicted on them. The reason why we must not forget is that this way we can continue to honor the victims of the violence of the past" (Ricoeur, 1998, p.31, translation IH).

Behind these pieces of art as traces, there is an artistic emergence which occurs at the border and constitutes the core of my essay. I investigate the impact of using art to politically critical locations such as international borders in general and the U.S.-Mexican border in particular. Art such as graffiti and guerrilla art has dealt with politics in public spaces or walls. However, I am aware of the peculiarity of this mode of expression born on and at the border, in the sense that these modes of display in disputed territories contribute to the legitimization and the emergence of 'art geopolitics,' as suggested by Amilhat Szary (Amilhat Szary, 2012, p.222), according to whom borders, borderlands, and conflicts produce art.

Amilhat Szary adopts a critical position towards the influence of this art on the perception and the reception of borders: "By multiplying [...] images linked to the border, even if they claim to be politically subversive, this border art contributes in its way to disseminate, reinforce the idea among a general public that borders are problematic, violent and closed places, while closed barriers represent only 10% of borders" (France Culture, 2019, translation IH). Additionally, she mentions the relation between this art style and the art market. Border walls are designed to impose a geopolitical vision through the effects of geopolitics on geography (physical or human), politics, and international relations, as political borders remain in our times basic elements of the international system. To quote Morrissey and Warner:

Through these artists' engagement with history, their art forms depict border spaces that are characterized by intersecting geopolitical and biopolitical modalities. In other words, the artworks deconstruct causal relationships between geography and the assumptive power and authority of the nation-state in addition to examining the politicization of the human body. (Morrissey and Warner, 2018, p.196)

They understand “geopolitics as a method of analysis that examines the relationships between geography and the power and authority of politics. Additionally, for Michel Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics—discourses that politicize the body, medicine, and science” (ibid., p.212). Thus, the implication of border art in the geopolitical and biopolitical parameters of the divide becomes evident.

According to Michel Foucault, biopolitics refers to political power over every feature of human life. In *Security, Territory, Population*, he conceptualizes biopolitics as operating through apparatuses of security. Thus, he relates the two terms. To quote:

What is involved is the emergence of technologies of security within mechanisms that are either specifically mechanisms of social control, as in the case of the penal system, or mechanisms with the function of modifying something in the biological destiny of the species. (Foucault, 2007, p.25)

Foucault looks into borders and territories in relation to sovereignty: “Baldly, at first sight and somewhat schematically, we could say that sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population. Territorial borders, individual bodies, and a whole population, yes ... but this is not the point and I don’t think it holds together” (ibid.). Amilhat Szary agrees with Foucault’s proposal: “Walls and barriers are only one part of this phenomenon, the other being that surveillance ‘*dispositifs*’ (or sets of techniques and practices in the Foucauldian sense) rely on hard devices to support all networks and the topological circulation of information” (Amilhat Szary and Giraut, 2015, p.5, author’s italics).

During the construction of the sampling, I was confronted with a multitude of expressions and techniques, and that is why it became necessary to build a mode of selection. After investigation, I noted a specific and relevant criterion in some artwork about “spatializing the wall” and creating an area around it; the representativeness of this criterion permitted me to structure my taxonomy on the one hand, and to debate the question from an architectural perspective on the other. Also, the negation of the wall was mainly achieved by transforming it into space, by spatializing and “architecturing” it. Thus, I opted for samples treating the border wall by extending its line of separation into a zone of communication and connection, making it a part or an accessory within a whole installation and a line negotiated by the minds and bodies of the actors on both sides. Creating space around Trump’s wall leads

to the denial of its main divisive function while switching it for a substitute function, albeit temporarily, such as for exchanging, playing, congregating, or eating.

As the major assumption of this paper is the presence of an architectural aspect in the artwork, of a faculty to redraw land-borders, and of a biopolitical dimension in the performances at and around the border, I mount my observational scaffolding according to two parameters which are elements of the “new” functions. By the first, I mean architecture’s montage, and by the second, the activities allowed by the temporary installation.

This artwork, consisting of pieces of design activism, is now-viral content generated through real-time connections and through new communication interfaces, specifically Instagram and Twitter, where artists’ posts appeal to followers to interact and participate in their performances by maximizing likes and shares. This type of art at the border seems to be more courageous by displaying a riskier act targeting the advance and deployment of the line over the two sides.

Firstly, I should state that the list of examples is selective. Secondly, we also note that the interpretation which is outlined in what follows does not exclude other lenses. Lastly, I am prioritizing my workload to ensure spatial and architectural criteria to deal with the geopolitics of the policed territory as well as with the biopolitics of the performances.

The four border art pieces bear witness to a range of techniques and media used by different artists and by an architect. Also, they reproduce the experiences of humans in trouble, principally migrants, to render visible their many forms of daily suffering.

I present the artworks while conceptualizing their creation based on the chronology of their exhibitions.

It should also be mentioned that these are the most “salient” works and the ones most frequently circulated on social networks, and given that this is a fairly recent phenomenon; I cover the period from 2005 to 2017, all the more so because these artists used the internet to disseminate, support, and promote their works.

From footage to visual art, and from architectural proposals to art installations, I have gathered the most circulated performances exhibited in border art. Also, the pieces are spread over the last two decades, with an average of two per decade. Thus, I start with the piece *Walleyball* edited by Brent Hoff in 2006 (A1), then I look at *Erasing the Border*, the project by Ana Tereza Fernández from 2011 to 2016 (A2).

Later, I address the intervention by architect Ronald Rael through his work *Teeter-Totter Wall* set up in 2016 (A3), to finish with a last artistic reaction towards the border, JR's *Giant Kikito*, an artwork created in 2017 (A4.a/b). It must be noted that this order is not only temporal; it also follows the catalysts of spatial evolution throughout the changes undergone by the artistic exhibitions, with more mobile works and a remarkable presence of videos, performances, and installations, as will be shown in the second part. The implantation of artworks has developed all across the U.S.-Mexico border; the first sample was exhibited on the border fence separating Tijuana Playas from San Diego's Border Field State Park: this region, as mentioned above, was marked as being a cradle for border art and is still inspiring artists and activists. The second was made in El Paso-Juárez. The third was a multi-location performance (first in San Diego-Tijuana), and the last one was in Tecate.

After their presentation, I will proceed to their analysis through their architectural features including geographical and territorial paths, and then through their biopolitical ones.

After an explanation of the political context in which these works flourished, and their inscription within the movement of border art and guerrilla art, the analysis will be structured first by the description of the formal aspects of the work and the techniques used.

The speeches of artists, being media of communication, are as meaningful as their works, and so I will also transcript and explore them, as a data base, to spread the artistic artwork in all its scope.

In terms of biopolitics, I will deal with the position of these works concerning the body, whether that of the artist or those of the participants appearing as co-performers.

Artwork Sampling and Analysis

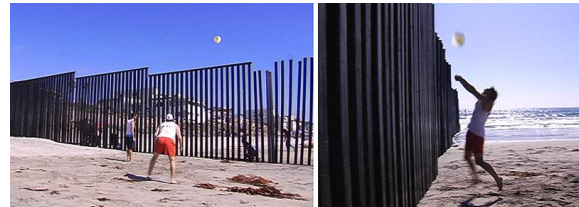
Border art/artists often address the forced politicization of human bodies and of the physical land as well as the arbitrary, yet incredibly harmful separations that are created by these borders and boundaries. Art pieces make viewers interact with objects and installations in new artificial and ephemeral environments. At the same time, I recognize the recourse to the site-specificity of the border as forming the core of all the artworks. I see that these artistic works' deploy the wall architecturally. The "spatialization technique" used by the artists is striking; no poster or "linear" artistic modes: their answers are architectural

and "*architecturing*," i.e. acts of doing architecture. They create a space, an extension to the border line.

Presentation

WALLEYBALL, BRENT HOFF (2006)

Brent Hoff is an American writer and filmmaker. As a co-founder of Wolphin DVD, he filmed *Drunk Bees* and *Born Like Stars*. In 2006, he made a playful yet subversive plea for humanity on the U.S.-Mexico *frontera*. He imagined the first international border volleyball game in the world, *Walleyball*, amid the stern hum of helicopters. A friendly game exposed two Mexican beachgoers to two Americans in a volleyball match over-the-fence (fig.1).



Walleyball fig.1

Source: <http://www.borderwallasarchitecture.com/?projects=walleyball>

Players had to throw the ball higher than 20 feet (five meters), though Brent Hoff's *Walleyball* was not the first such game. After Naco-Arizona and Naco-Sonora had been split by a roughly 13-foot high border fence, a famous game of volleyball was played in 1979 between their citizens during the Fiesta Bi-Nacional: "This annual gathering of residents from Naco and Naco defies enforced division by temporarily reuniting the communities through a celebration of art, music, dance, games and food, transforming the fence into a point of connection rather than a security barrier" (Weber, 2011, p.81).

Brent Hoff describes the border as a covert demilitarized zone (DMZ):

There is enough border patrol agents on the U.S.-Mexico border to put one every thousand yards from the shores of the Pacific to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. All the military surplus from the Vietnam War landed on the Mexican-American border; [it]'s a militarized border they have heat sensors, motion detection sensors [xxx] ^{iv}, they use military weapons, military vehicles, [xxx], they have helicopters, they have horse patrols. They really consider themselves in a war zone. (*Walleyball*, 2006)

By using a ludic simulacrum, the wall is assimilated to a makeshift net. I should note that

the game was possible because the top was not angled, as in some places with triple fencing, inward to make it harder to climb over.

The three-minute film was shown live in 117 countries as part of TED's "Pangea Day." It immerses viewers in a virtual reality and transports them to the conflict line. It was also projected later on CNN's "Christiane Ammanpour – The Power of the Interview" in 2009, as part of the show's commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

On the matter of physical effort, Hoff's teammate says: "After an hour or so, we call it quits. Our wrists are red and raw as we go to the fence to shake hands. A crowd gathers for this moment of cultural exchange, which turns into a photo opportunity" (Bearman, 2006, n.p.).

Walleyball documented the racialization of borders and the use of citizenship by the sovereignty and by dominant (anti-immigrant) groups, including pro-Trump groups. This artwork bears witness to people who would be free to play together against those forces determined to keep them separated.

ERASING THE BORDER/ 'BORRANDO LA FRONTERA, 'ANA TEREZA FERNÁNDEZ (2011-2016)

Mexican visual artist performer and painter Ana Tereza Fernández has dealt with the border on many occasions; namely since 2005 with a performance documentation entitled *No puedo pasar/I Can't Pass*, with *Front Wet Back* in 2011, and *In Between/En Medio* in 2013. She is preoccupied with the female body, race, and gender, which, through her performances, she turns into an aesthetically charged medium. She says regarding her project "*Erasing the Border* (fig.2):



Erasing the Border fig.2

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

The idea aims to emulate the continuation of the sky like if it was a curtain placed in front of it. And we made

it specifically in this space because there is a street that starts in Mexico and continues in the United States, but there is barrier that prevents movement across it. So we intend to create the illusion like there is only sky. (AJ+, 2015)

Actually, the first edition of the performance took place in 2011. The second one was through a community engagement with people from all over Arizona in 2015, the third was in 2016.

Prior, the artist explains the political context in which her creation was made: "... it was in 2011, where I saw that this area [above: Friendship Park] where people used to converge at the border, people from all over the world, from Latin America and the US, Canada, and beyond, they would come here and meet sometimes after 20 years of being separated and embrace and touch and hug. Under the Obama administration, sadly, Friendship Park closed its doors until people were no longer able to touch, and that was I think one of the most heart-breaking moments for me, to witness how that separation occurred where people were only able to see themselves across this metal mesh. And [that]'s when I knew I had to do something, and I came up with the idea of *Borrando la Frontera* which was to bring the sky back down between the U.S. and Mexico border" (LatiNation, 2017).

She painted a part of the border wall while imitating the tones of the landscape. At a certain distance, the slats seem to be erased and let the picturesque view on the Pacific Ocean appear freely. She used a chromatic artefact close to the landscape's palette to ensure visual continuity. The artist creates a concept of unity from the sky taken as scenery; she uses the blue color to conceptualize a new geography and thus a new geopolitical structure with erased and porous borders.

The artist described the violence and suffering inflicted by the wall upon the lives of Mexicans: as a symbol of pain, where the lives of those who failed to cross it were deplored.

The artist witnessed the success of the effect of illusion she produced: "I was almost done when I heard a loud voice: "I get it! I get it!" I'm doing this because I'm a runner coming from far away. I got down from the ladder, and this runner said, "I thought the wall was coming down, and for a minute, I was able to imagine what this place would look like: What if there were no walls?" (TED, 2017). Fernández continued: "This image went viral, and in 2015, I was invited to do the first artist statewide residency. The talk about building another wall was rampant at that time. So we decided to do '*Borrando la Frontera*' again, but this time at the Nogales border, as a community engagement project" (ibid.).

In 2016, the artwork was instantiated in three locations at the same time: Mexicali, Agua Prieta, and El Paso, with activists and artists at all locations engaging with it as a form of community intervention^v: “We hit three different states at the same time and perforated it with the sky and we projected it at those three different locations worldwide and just like sharing this thought of like ‘not having a wall divide us’” (LatiNation, 2017).

She used “site-specificity”, the category which had emerged during the 1960s in the art world, doing so in three states, indicating the scope of the amplification and the enormous geographic and geopolitical expansion of the border.

For the residents of the border town of Nogales, Mexico, blue has become a symbol of open skies and porous borders. For the groups of volunteers from both sides joining the artist to “erase” the border, the blue-painted fence represents not only a new view, but a brand new way of reflecting on the experience of the border for those whose lives are impacted by it.

Following this experience, the artist has been encouraged to expand the series to other cities along the border.

TEETER-TOTTER WALL, RONALD RAE (2016)

The architect Ronald Rael got involved in the situation of the divide through his architectural projects. He declares: “My interest in borders came about when I was searching for an architecture of the borderlands. And I was working on several projects along the U.S.-Mexico border, designing buildings made out of mud taken right from the ground” (TED, 2019).

Inspired by Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy, who stated “architects do not design walls, but the spaces between them,” Rael responded: “So while I do not think that architects should be designing walls, I do think [it]’s important and urgent that they should be paying attention to those spaces in between. They should be designing for the places and the people; the landscapes that the wall endangers” (ibid.). Considering the problems of the border wall, Rael maintains his fundamental question: “Is the wall architecture?” He describes his projects, such as “Prada Marfa,” as land-art sculptures that cross the border between art and architecture. He argues that architecture could communicate ideas that are much more politically and culturally complex, as he explains: “architecture could be satirical and serious at the same time and it could speak to the disparities between wealth and poverty and [what]’s local and [what]’s foreign” (ibid.), adding: “where the actions on one side had a direct consequence on what happens on the other side.”

Over the course of his book *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*, Rael runs through a number of ruminations by activists and scholars to show the absurdity inherent to the wall as a piece of architecture, and furthermore to show the futility of the project of splitting sister-city communities.

For his installation, Rael needed a support for the teeter-totter. He reused the wall, changed its state from an austere barrier to a support and turned it into a fulcrum for the game. Straddling the steel border fence separating El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico, the architect installed the Teeter-Totter Wall using the divide as an enabling device. He set up three pink seesaws allowing children on both sides to play together and interact (fig.3).

The Teeter-Totter Wall illustrates the delicate balance between the two nations. “The wall became a literal fulcrum for U.S.-Mexico relations,” he said in an Instagram post about his art installation once the swings were added for an only 40-minute-long temporary playground. While playing, with all of the properties of the game contributing (rules, freedom, and pleasure), the participants felt the freedom of the game neutralizing the peculiarity of the environment as border area and area of conflict.

Rael recognizes the spatial, psychological, social, and architectural repercussions of the border: “As an architectural intervention, the wall has transformed large cities, small towns, and a multitude of cultural and ecological biomes along its path, creating a Divided States of North America, defined by some as a no-man’s-land and by others as a third nation” (Rael, 2017, p.11).



Teeter-Totter Wall fig.3

Source: Rael 2019.

Ronald Rael explained his work as being both ‘public art’ and ‘guerrilla art’; intended to be an act of protest, it remained unsanctioned. He considers the wall a public space and defended the architectural project for the line. In fact, he declared that the Teeter-Totter Wall was meant to reinforce the laudable idea that borderlands need to remain accessible to the public rather than turning into inaccessible demilitarized zones (Rael, 2019).

GIANT KIKITO, JR, 2017

JR is a Parisian guerrilla artist, author of the Face 2 Face project on the Israeli West Bank barrier, who installed an XXL photomontage entitled *Giant Kikito* in Tecate, a part of the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area and on the border with California (JR, 2018).

In fact, Kikito is the little boy painted on the photomontage. He lives in Tecate with his mother who permitted to JR to install his work on her land. The installation was set up with the help of Mexican curator Pedro Alonzo.

The black and white photomontage uses a "trompe-l'oeil"; the child is peeking curiously over the border to the U.S. side, the only place from which the whole installation is visible. JR draws attention to the U.S.-Mexico border wall from the ingenious perspective of a child who doesn't either see or understand the concept of borders. He shares: "One day I woke up and I saw a kid looking over the wall. I was wondering; What is this kid thinking? What would any kid think? We know that a one-year-old doesn't have a political vision, or any political point of view and doesn't see walls as we see them" (JR, 2019a).

Black and white replace colors for JR, and with them, the photographer erases socio-cultural differences, and even skin color and race. Once the artwork was installed, people from the two sides began to gather and wave all around to meet each other. JR dislikes separation, which is why his work focuses on connecting people. To quote him on Instagram: "Separating babies from their mothers is not the answer and is immoral." Photos of the art installation began to surface in social media. JR declared to *The New Yorker* that his work aimed at a human conversation, as a peaceful message about child immigration, rather than a political conversation. The project lasted for only a month, at the end of which JR decided to mark the closing of the installation, so he advertised on his Instagram: "Giant picnic' today in Tecate ... people eating the same food, sharing the same water, enjoying the same music (half of the band on each side) around the eye of a dreamer ... we forget the wall for a minute..." (JR, 2017).

It is a transposition and a reuse of a real scene of life, as JR attested: "seeing all those people meeting at the border during that entire month and exchanging their phones through the wall, it gave me the idea to do a next step of the project which was the closing" (JR, 2019b). The long table has Mayra's^{vi} two eyes printed on it. The artist uses a "trompe-l'oeil," and four metal rods are pasted on the table on the Mexican side, to render and imitate the effect of continuity. The table, in its religious Christian and symbolic dimensions (Eucharist), is only built on the

Mexican side; on the U.S. one, it is spread out on the floor (JR, 2019b).

This scene reminds us of a saying: "When you have more than you need build a longer table, not a bigger fence." The huge table along both sides creates a space of sharing by deploying this specific and symbolic furniture in the two fields, through the metal pylons, where people pass food and goods through the wall.

Analysis

THE REDEFINING OF ARCHITECTURAL AND TERRITORIAL FEATURES

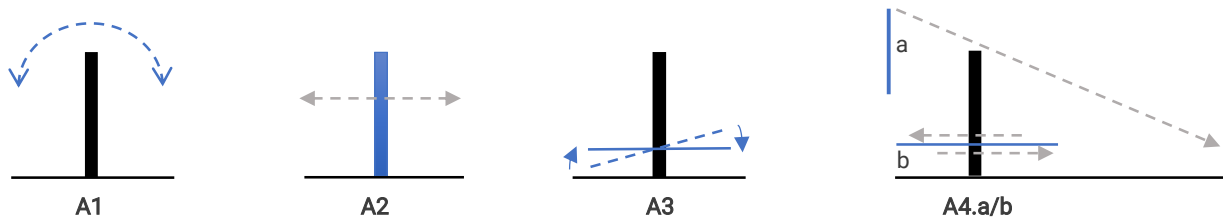
Before proceeding further with the discussion of these artistic exhibitions, it is necessary to pause for a moment in order to consider the ability of imagination regarding the possibility of unification, to measure its creative power to gather people and, eventually, be it for only a moment, to tear down the border wall or any kind of barrier or fence. In view of this, discounting the concept of boundary is allowed and widely encouraged by the art.

As I have opted for the analysis of a variety of works and techniques, I recognize different schemes for the architectural aspect of the territory around the wall. Indeed, as for border art, I recognize the reflection pertaining to border architecture including with American architects who have dealt with this specificity since 2001. However, in contrast to the border seen as a political artefact, I aim to highlight the act of "architecturing" the wall as a form of protest. I state that the greatest struggle against a line is to make it into space. This is the architecturing act that I deal with it.

Altogether, the sampling assembled here supports a waxing of the space through the concept of architecturing and conversely the waning of the line. The following descriptive diagrams illustrate and synthesize the idea of the spatial implementation (fig.4).

In Brent Hoff's work, the spatialization scheme is constructed as a connection through the play between the two separate territories (fig.4: A1).

For architect Ronald Rael, the pink swings are a peaceful bridge between the two neighbors for them to spend a moment of pleasure and exchange, especially for children. In the elementary scheme of the work, the structure of balance between the two entities on either side is clear, as Rael explained that everything that happens on one side will have its consequence on the other (fig.4: A2).



Spatialization concept of artworks fig.4

Source: author's own elaboration 2022.

The concept of unity is originary for Rael: "Walls do not define distinct landscapes, but rather divide into two what was once one" (TED, 2019). Ana Tereza Fernández's work was undertaken in several cities at the same time and later relaunched as a serial performance, where she proceeds to an architecturing of the territory by employing the landscape and the sky which, for the time being at least, continues to escape divisibility (fig.4: A3).

At this point, it is essential to share the opinion of geographer Vincent Veschambre, who considers marking to be a materialization of the appropriation of space, besides its symbolic dimension. According to him, marking presents two forms of material actions:

Either through manufacturing, reuse (or even destruction) of significant markers (boundary markers, barriers, signs, graffiti, sculptures, monuments...) who register more or less in duration and leave a mark. Or through the presence of bodies and of the signs which they carry (clothes, placards, etc.) during events which are recurrent (demonstrations, parades, parties, etc.) or exceptional, which 'make their mark' on the mind and associate a place to social groups or institutions who stage themselves there. In the first case, we could speak of 'trace marking', and in the second, of 'presence marking,' these two forms of material action not being mutually exclusive. (Veschambre, 2004, p.73, translation IH)

JR's architecturing the borderlands from a specific point of view, projects something akin to a beam cast upon the neighbor. The one-year-old baby, by his innocent and disengaged touch upon the American border from the Mexican side, is trying to look over to the other side. JR proceeded by a visual projection whose drop point is located on the American neighbors' land. It thus forms an artefact of extension and connection between the two territories (fig.4: A4. a).

The proximity between A1 and A3 shows the expansion of the symmetrical pattern for the spatialization of the wall.

The A2 scheme that merges with the wall accentuates the visual effect of its destruction by

mere coloring, in addition to highlighting the power of these performances to emphasize the physical work carried out by the performer and by the contributors. Thus, the work amplifies both symbolic and aesthetic demolition. In A2, the territory is virtually unified and the wall, in its linear definition, is restricted to the benefit of spatial maximization. In contrast to the A1 and A3 schemes, A4.a proliferates a tension between the two terrains and builds causality between them, whereas A4.b uses the symmetrical scheme, the one seen in A1 and A3 and which is the most common, to architect and create a connection through the wall.

The A1 scheme is a borrowing one, being mostly inspired by popular responses already practiced by the populations along the border, the A2 work concretizes the pinnacle of border art; like graffiti, it is a reflection of the gesture and of the transient identity of the 'tagger' where the artist's intervention is concentrated on the barrier. Otherwise, this scheme offers the most extended space, which is somewhat unexpected.

We should mention that this scheme is somewhat 'illusionary architecture,' which further reinforces its strong visual effect.

Brent Hoff's artwork, as mentioned above, is very close to the popular and spontaneous form of protest which occurred when citizens from the two Nacos played volleyball as a commemoration of the bi-national heritage, with transnational cross-border volleyball having endured for forty years. As for JR's work, the giant Kikito with its over-sizing and scaling amplifies the ambiguous effect of domination in a sort of dizzying overlapping of opposite dualities: child/big-child/border, big-wall/biggest-Kikito, etc. The "big," as a concept developed through JR's work and photomontages, sticks well with Trump's quote of "A Biiiiig Wall."

Yet this representative sampling makes it possible to classify the works of art into three types of deployments modifying the border's conception and perception from a rigid and separating line to a space of connection and exchange.

Thus, I want to itemize(see fig.5):

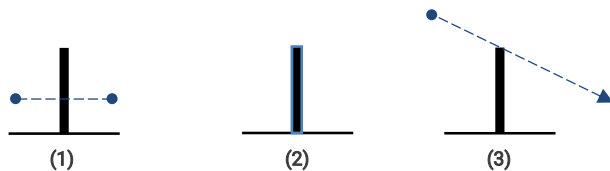
- “the symmetrical” (1): two outside points set the line as a middle line, as it deploys two “equal” parts (A1, A3, and A4.b).

The basic scheme draws a balanced effect as inherent to the ontology and phenomenology of the wall. It is the more common and traditional scheme.

- “the on” (2): virtuality and aesthetics on the line, using visual effects (A2)

The second scheme works as graffiti or border art and bears witness to its development over four decades, with its wall-as-canvas approach; it is the more aesthetically developed. It is more closely related to the processes of graffiti and ‘trace-marking,’ in an ostentatious way.

- “the asymmetrical” (3): one point outside the line creates a perspective effect using a combination of projection and visual effects resulting in spatial tension (A4.a).

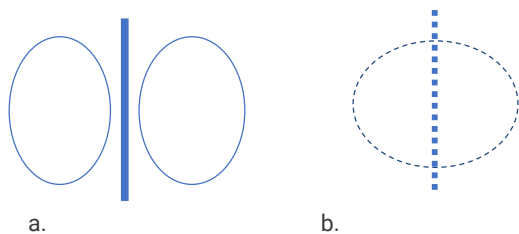


Artwork schemes fig.5

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2022.

The last scheme is more tensional one; it probably aims to force the barrier and the observer by presenting other points of view and dynamic balances.

Thus, in all the artworks presented here, we move from divided borderlands with two undefined entities (fig.6.a) to a common area and space of connection with a single defined unit (fig.6.b), through an artistic work which has for main consequence the negation of the border wall. The pattern emerging is graphically represented below: (fig.6)



Changing a territory's configuration from separation to unification fig.6

Source: author's own elaboration 2022.

THE REDEFINING OF THE BIOPOLITICAL FEATURE

Foucault, outlining the operational mode of any sovereignty to control population, explains the concept of “milieu”: “The sovereign deals with a

nature, or rather with the perpetual conjunction, the perpetual intrication of a geographical, climatic, and physical milieu with the human species insofar as it has a body and a soul, a physical and a moral existence; and the sovereign will be someone who will have to exercise power at that point of connection where nature, in the sense of physical elements, interferes with nature in the sense of the nature of the human species, at that point of articulation where the milieu becomes the determining factor of nature. This is where the sovereign will have to intervene, and if he wants to change the human species, Moheau says, it will be by acting on the milieu. I think we have here one of the axes, one of the fundamental elements in this deployment of mechanisms of security, that is to say, not yet the appearance of a notion of milieu, but the appearance of a project, a political technique that will be addressed to the milieu” (Foucault, 2007, p.38).

The architectural path leads us to deal with the geopolitical aspect of conflicting borderlands, while the use of the body throughout the performances leads us to deal with biopolitics. The use of the human body as a site for political resurgence is a biopolitical display *par excellence*. Besides, the bodywork includes the participation of the spectators who in such cases are no longer mere spectators as they take part in the performance, participate, and contribute.

Foucauldian biopolitics, as a technique of exclusion through gender or race, was manipulated by the artists' embodiment of the border through the experiences of immigrants.

Is this game legal? Is Hoff endangering himself? In fact, as the *LAWeekly* writes: “Hoff suddenly wonders if hitting the ball back and forth constitutes a violation of U.S. Customs law, since goods are technically being transported across an international border. ‘Does a nice volley amount to three strikes? Can we all get thrown in the slammer?’ One friend of Brent's refused to come down because he thought we'd all get shot” (Bearman, 2006, n.p.). Besides, some measures were taken: smooth and friendly talking, to add a surreptitious camera placement.

In *Walleyball*, the instability of the camera and the low quality of the picture due to the lack of a fixed position from which to film show the truth conveyed by the movie. It was conceptualized as a war picture captured hastily and discreetly, and as a testimony of the risk taken by the reporter in

this critical context (fig.7). This is also clear from the noisy voice of the audio's footage making speech inaudible in some segments, as I indicated by inserting in brackets Brent Hoff's quote above.



Helicopter's surveillance fig.7

Source: <https://aeon.co/videos/the-world-s-most-illegal-game-of-volleyball-was-played-over-the-us-mexico-border>

Similarly, Ronald Rael wrote on his Instagram: "This moment. We [weren't] sure what was about to happen, but the soldiers allowed everyone to continue to play, smiled, and took photos" (fig.8).



Body performance amid patrol agents' control fig.8

Source: Rael 2019.

Regarding the work of Ana Tereza Fernández amid surveillance by patrol agents, she reported her experience:

The next morning, at the border, I went there with my mother at 7 a.m., and I began to erase it. Fifteen minutes into it, we heard these glaring sirens come through the beach, on this pickup truck. Two border patrol agents attempted to arrest me. Had I not been wearing a dress and stilettos, which completely baffled them, I think they would have!! But it allowed me to start talking about the concept and what I was trying to do. And I could see over time that they started grasping the idea, and after 45 minutes of debating back and forth, they finally allowed me to proceed (TED, 2017). (see fig.9)

Marina Abramović, the 'grandmother of performance art,' is one of the artistic influences of Fernández. Therefore, she performs with her body to reveal gender and the ambivalence of



The Border Patrol fig.9

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

femininity through the body's endurance. Bob Dickinson reported her bodily expressions:

Wearing a black cocktail dress and pumps, and seen in several of the photographs standing on top of a ladder, the artist's performance comments on the contradictory demands the border places on Latin American women, as it offers hope but also demands labour. (Dickinson, 2018, p.12) (see fig.10).



Body on the border fig.10

Source: Ana Teresa Fernández 2020.

I recognize the ladder used by the artist as an artefact related to illegal immigrants – for them it is "tailor-made" workmanship reminiscent of the famous quote by Arizona's Governor: "You show me a 50-foot wall, and [I'll] show you a 51-foot ladder^{vii}" (attributed to Napolitano 2005, Greenhouse, 2011, n.p).

Such workmanship is used by graffiti, street, and guerrilla artists, and by public art, because of the hidden, even nocturnal, dealing with urban space, buildings, and places which are in many cases inaccessible.

As for JR, he evokes biopolitics regarding origins, inequalities, and racialization through his use of black and white as an artistic signature by which he endeavors to erase, respectively, cultural differences, social conditions, and races. JR's artwork is also subject to border patrol surveillance (JR, 2017).

The giant picnic would not have taken place on the two sides without the contribution of the spectators in the performance, something he mentioned witnessing when he said: "For the last

10 years, I have been working in conflict zone, jails, borders, and I always found an 'angel' that helped us make the impossible possible... The picnic today was clearly forbidden, and yet it was not shut down. It's always worth trying" (JR, 2017). Surprisingly, nobody came. Only after one hour a patrol agent approached the scene. JR reported his talk with him:

[...] he came and we talked and I proposed him to share tea and he accepted and so I took a cup of tea he took one and we chinned [sic] through the wall and he actually stayed for another hour talking with people, talking with Mayra and we couldn't believe what was happening and he was sharing stories with her about the fact that he also have [sic] family on the other side and that he understand[sic] but at the same time he have [sic] to do his job but today they closed their eyes on this and they saw it from the hills and decided not to do anything. (JR, 2019b).

A video was posted on his Instagram including the patrol agent's peaceful intervention during the picnic. The participation of the people in the installation of the table on the U.S. side was relevant, JR reports: "there was nobody on the other side, because we couldn't build a table," until something happened:

After like an hour or an hour and a half you know, people were coming [...], we told them wait! Can you grab this? And we pass them the top through the fence, then they hold the top open then we sent little drone and we try to match the table with the top, and then we told them that's good that's good don't move just put it on the floor, and they all sat, and then we're like okay maybe we only have couple of minutes because the Border Patrol are watching so let's go fast and so we started passing food" (JR, 2019b).

Thus, participants on the U.S. side can actually be considered as co-artists and co-authors from the Mexican side in the case of this particular artwork. Meanwhile, the wall seemed to fade out of existence and to matter no more: "and we started picnicking, and after 10 minutes after 30 minutes after 45 minutes no one came and stopped us so we started to relax, and we started to enjoy the moment and even almost forgot that the wall was there it was really a moment of time where we forgot, people were talking to each other passing the salt through the wall" (ibid.). In fact, by relying on the artworks' playful (A1, A3) or chromatic (A2, A3) aspects, or on activities of throwing (A1), of "connecting" (as a tenet of JR's work) (A4.a/b), or eating (A4.b), the artists had other plans for the border than having it be a mere line. The colorful palette chosen by the conceptual-

artists (blue (A2), pink (A3)) created an upbeat atmosphere, sending a message of hope. The black and white, as an uncolorful palette, yet a lightening balance, could put the spotlight on the precise limits of bordering between the U.S. and Mexico. I synthesize the geopolitical biopolitical parameters of artworks which I compared to the initial configuration imposed by the border as a political artefact, in a manner as to emphasize the manipulation of those parameters in favor of "no border," which allows me to draw the following table (see fig.11).

	Territory: Geopolitics	Bodies: Biopolitics	Intentional embodiment
Initial Configuration	Separation: 2 entities	Climbing, passing food, phones, goods, digging	
A1. Walleyball Brent Hoff	Connected space 1 entity	Playing, jumping	Game strategy: socialization, abolishing racialization and determinations
A2. Erasing the border. A.T. Fernández	Extended space 1 entity	Body-artistic performance: Effort/aesthetical + painting Participants contribution symbolic painting	A strong embodiment expressing endurance, Aesthetics features
A3. Tetter-Totter Wall R. Rael	Connected space 1 entity	Playing, laughing, gathering	Game strategy: playful bodies, socialization, abolishing determinations
A4.a Giant Kikito. JR	Connected space 1 entity	Shooting, connecting with Kikito	Visual connection with the child portrait, visual endurance, aesthetic racialization
A4.b Giant Picnic. JR	Continual space 1 entity	Eating, passing food	Symbolic/religious/ ritual sharing, racialization abolished

Redefining Geopolitics and Biopolitics Through Artworks fig.11
Source: authors' own elaboration 2020.

Conclusion

In matters of art, walled frontiers have historically engaged and inspired artists as these reached the Berlin Wall as one of the largest canvases in the world. However, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall appears to have broken the record within its first decade. The period preceding the era of globalization witnessed the erection of borders and walls. Our current era, for its part, marks the return to a politics of paranoia triggering a period of reclosing borders, rebordering, and the emergence of walls throughout a Walled World. Indeed, security has become the corollary of present-day globalization with a thriving market of borders as the 'security industry' continues to manufacture borders and walls.

The architectural response made it possible to manipulate parameters that are more geopolitical than biopolitical, in contrast to artwork involving only on the canvas.

Artwork exhibited on the wall that lines the U.S.-Mexico border are a form of protest and struggle carrying a discourse of subversion. Through interactive and spatial art installations and performances, artists proceed to redefine the wall and its environment for the time of the artwork's lifespan. Whether they use symmetrical schemes or asymmetrical ones, artists agree about their subversive position against the wall as endangering human values which they defend and believe in, values such as freedom and equality.

Walleyball shaped the artists' but also the viewers' impressions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands through a destruction of the racializing wall by using the strategy's game allowing socialization and taking a distance from determinations. JR also dispels the racialization of the border by means of a black and white non-chromatic but lightness binarity.

Ana Teresa Fernández performs with her body to embody gender and endurance on the border.

The artists' conception of land and territory and the interpretation of their bodies or of those of the participants testify to the whole meaning of the border with respect to the territory and to the population under a sovereign hegemonic system. Brent Hoff's footage is an artistic film project linking migration and space exploration through the game, where racialization is unknown.

Fernández's artwork, through the representation of the landscape and the use of her body in the first iteration of the work, encompasses both a geopolitical and a biopolitical dimension of the wall. Proceeding through community engagement in the two subsequent reiterations of "Erasing the Border," the artwork amplifies the protest message and aspires to become an icon of resistance.

The pink seesaws formed an installation balanced between the two borderlands, forming "dyads" connecting people through the game, mainly children being the future generations. For them, the seesaws will symbolically remain to swing until attaining equality between its two sides.

The black and white Giant Kikito seems to leave unanswered the child's question: "What is a border?"

All the performances took place in real-time, in "the here and now," in the "Hic et Nunc," in a kind

of endurance of this “present moment.” However, in relation to the concept of endurance as an artistic reference in the art world, the present was extended for as long as the observer-participant interacted with the artwork. This endurance allows assimilation of the experience of the suffering of people at the border in both psychological and physiological terms.

Moreover, artists’ speeches are another means of communication; they are conveyed by virtual platforms or social networks, promoting on the one hand the documentation of the work and its reception and dissemination on the other. In addition to the conventional speeches developed on behalf of the work, the artists, except for Brent Hoff, gave TED conferences (TED: Technology, Entertainment and Design).

With the passage from canvas to performances, the perception of the work and its reception in the sampling analyzed is no longer anchored to the comfort of disengagement. The receiver leaves the status of an observer who stands in front of a canvas in a state of aesthetic contemplation to become, through the work, as involved as the artist, with a status of participant making a committed contribution.

These persons who were invited and involved, notwithstanding unconsciously, proved that they had resources; the explanation of this is found in the game’s spring and principles inherent to performance art. In addition, the public was invited to participate and act in a way as to temporarily embody a “new biopolitics” through playing, painting, and eating; all this while temporarily dismantling the old biopolitics as oppressive, degrading, and even deadly status.

Regarding the geopolitical features of the territory, we notice that frontiers no longer provide the distancing of borders thrown over the far reaches, that the territory no longer offers the buffer that once surrounded it. The border is instead moving closer to the inhabitants, to the capital, to the state. Modern society does not provide the historical and geographical margins that traditional society did. Many other parameters can be considered to contribute, such as the bordering urbanization, the hyper-development of the security industry, and the warfare arsenal. Modern society proceeds by

putting lines in the front, in contrast to the backward-looking lines of the past.

Notwithstanding that, in reality, the wall is still maintained by force, power, and defended by the fear of others, it nevertheless carries the remembrances of the victim-dreamers on the other side of the “World/Wall.” Theoretically, the artists show that the border as a line cannot exist because it does not resist simultaneous interactions between its two sides.

A borderless world remains utopian and metaphoric, being affronted with the upsurge of new fences and walls entailed by the processes of reordering and rethinking frontiers as seen during the globalization and post-9/11 eras.

Two realities are to be identified, though they seem to oppose the essence of the wall, which is that of separating and keeping away from its line, but paradoxically, they are inherent to it: the first is that no wall can withstand simultaneous forces of tension on either side of its surface. It becomes a remarkable contact zone. The second is that a wall, like any boundary, is subject to transgression. It may be diverted, exceeded, marked, deteriorated, and demolished. Besides, one stay perplexed about how many raised barriers there will be to collapse?

Frontiers and borders elicit the interest of scholars and researchers who study the issue of borders and territorialization, such as geographers (especially after the rise of cartography), geopoliticians, economists, and, more recently, artists have also been showing their interest in borders. This paper has explored the issue of how art comes to be grafted onto border fences and walls as a specific movement of border art that turns into a politically engaged medium, which may serve as a springboard for a new field in border studies through art, architecture, and the humanities. It has focused on the border wall and should provide a contribution for new border scholars taking an artistic approach to widen the view over the possibilities of expression according to other parameters, tools, and techniques.

To end on a poetic note, I think that as long as the sky is one for all of us, I can say: “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall” (Frost, 1914).

NOTES

ⁱ *Site-specificity - (or Site-specific), is term used to describe art that relates to a specific site and to emphasize the contextual quality of certain installations, "Border Door" being a masterpiece by Richard Lou (1988).*

ⁱⁱ *It is a street art that appeared primarily in the UK after which it spread across the world and became established in most countries where graffiti had already been developed. The principal tenets mentioned is that artists leave installations or pieces of art in public places, specifically unauthorized spaces, to express their views and opinions to a large audience in an anonymous way.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *It is a derogatory term used as an ethnic slur. It was originally coined and applied to Mexicans who entered by swimming or wading, getting wet in the process.*

^{iv} *Inaudible segments*

^v *Specified to me by the artist after a brief exchange with her through social media (Acknowledgements go to Ana Tereza Fernández).*

^{vi} *Mayra, a migrant/dreamer, is from San Francisco, but she was born in Mexico and came at a young age with her mother.*

^{vii} *Janet Napolitano was the Governor of Arizona (2003-2009) and President Barack Obama's Secretary of Homeland Security (2009-2013).*

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